

THE  
CIRCULAR LETTER

LETTER OF THE

Elders and Messengers

and — Churches, &c. — Baptists —  
OF THE SEVERAL *Midland*  
*Assoc.*

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

meeting at *Aulcester, Bewdley, Bengworth, Birmingham,*  
*Bourton and Stow, Bridgnorth, Bromsgrove, Hook-*  
*norton, Leicester, Leominster, Middleton-Cheney, Per-*  
*shire, Sutton, Tewkesbury, Upton, Warwick and*  
*Worcester*; met in ASSOCIATION at *Birmingham.*  
on *Tuesday* in the *Whitsun-Week*, 1764; maintaining  
the great Doctrines of three equal Persons in the  
God-head; eternal and personal Election; the origi-  
nal Guilt and Depravity of Mankind; particular  
Redemption; free Justification by the Righteous-  
ness of Christ imputed; efficacious Grace in Re-  
generation; and the final Perseverance of the  
Saints.

to the several Churches they represent, earnestly  
wishing that Grace and Peace may be multiplied  
thro' *Jesus Christ* our Lord.



T H E

# CIRCULAR LETTER.

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*Dear Brethren,*

**B**EING once more assembled to hear of your State and to consult what may be conducive to your spiritual Welfare; it now remains that we send you an Account of our annual Meeting, and give you a Word of Advice.

Have any of you been dilatory in the Duties of Religion, trifling with the great Things of your Profession, remiss with regard to Matters of Conscience, often absent from the House of God and the Supper of the Lord; have not carefully kept up Family and Closet Prayer; but have made too free with Sin, and the Ways and Works of the World: And hereby distressed your Pastors and Fellow Members, darkened your own Evidences, stupified your Souls, and grieved the holy Spirit. If this has been the unhappy Case with any of you; hear, dear Brethren, what we would say to you in Duty and Love. And we shall address you, not in our own Names or Language, but in the Name and Language of God himself.

“ Consider from whence you are fallen, and repent  
“ and do your first Works. For he that soweth to his  
“ Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but he  
“ that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap  
“ Life everlasting. Be not weary in well-doing, for in  
“ due Season ye shall reap, if ye faint not. We be-  
“ seech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that  
“ ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, ac-  
“ ceptable

“ ceptable to God, which is your reasonable Service.  
 “ And be ye not conformed to this World, but be ye  
 “ transformed by the Renewing of your Minds, that  
 “ ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and  
 “ perfect Will of God.”

“ Ye were sometimes Darknes, but now are ye  
 “ Light in the Lord ; walk as Children of Light.”

“ Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of  
 “ Darknes; but rather reprove them. And see that  
 “ ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise,  
 “ redeeming the Time, because the Days are evil. Let  
 “ no corrupt Communication proceed out of your  
 “ Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of edify-  
 “ ing, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers. Let  
 “ all Bitterness and Wrath, and Anger and Clamour,  
 “ and Evil-speaking, be put away from among you,  
 “ with all Malice.”

“ Use no filthy nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which  
 “ are not convenient ; but rather giving of Thanks.  
 “ And if ye be risen with Christ, seek those Things  
 “ that are above. Set your Affections on Things a-  
 “ bove, not on Things on the Earth. Submit your-  
 “ selves therefore to God, resist the Devil, and he will  
 “ flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will  
 “ draw nigh to you.”

And be assured of it, that nothing can give us more  
 Joy, than your spiritual Prosperity. 'Tis this we seek,  
 and for this we pray. We can say with the great  
 Apostle John, “ That we have no greater Joy, than to  
 “ hear that our Children walk in the Truth.” We re-  
 joice that ye *know* the Truth, and can *talk* of it ; but  
 more especially that ye *walk* in it.

There are many Persons that have speculative No-  
 tions of the Truth, and can make a Noise about it, and  
 yet



yet in their Hearts and Lives are avowed and practical Enemies to it; and, indeed, the greatest Enemies it hath. But those that have relished the Sweetness of divine Truth, felt its Power on their Hearts, and desire to practice what they know, are Christians indeed :----- Such Christians, dear Brethren, we would have you to be, and such we would hope, you are. And give us leave here to note, That practical Godliness is the best Proof of a State of Grace, and the strongest Evidence of the Heart being right with God. To establish the Truth of this Remark, we refer you to our Lord's Words, Mat. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Not our Lord, nor we, would by this suggest, that Salvation is of Works in Whole or Part; but 'tis intended to shew, that Knowledge must be reduced to Practice, and in the Christian Life there must be *Works* as well as *Words*: Otherwise, such Professors are but as sounding Brass, or the tinkling Symbal.

We most earnestly beg of you to be careful how you act in worldly Matters, and with worldly Men. Let all your Doings and Dealings be with the strictest Honesty and Honour. Mark well your Goings in your own Families, and among your Familiars: Whether you are Masters or Servants, married or single, rich or poor; or whatever are your Occupations or Callings in the World, set a Watch over your Hearts, Lips and Lives. Remember that the Interests of Religion are more affected by the Misconduct of its Professors, and the Name of Christ more dishonoured by their Slips and Falls, than by all that the Enemies of Christianity can say or do.

If you want Motives and Persuasives to a holy and heavenly Life, we can readily refer you to them; they are in the Word of inspired Truth, and are such as these:

“ God

“ God has loved you with an everlasting Love ;  
 “ chosen you in Christ before the Foundation of the  
 “ World ; predestinated you to the Adoption of Sons ;  
 “ given his own, his holy and beloved Son to die for  
 “ you ; and he has died for you, and redeemed you to  
 “ God by his Blood.----Your Iniquities are pardoned,  
 “ and your Persons are justified ; you are called with an  
 “ holy Calling, and shall be saved with an everlasting  
 “ Salvation. For 'tis the Will of your heavenly Fa-  
 “ ther, to give you the Kingdom ; and 'tis the Will of  
 “ your Redeemer and Lord, that you should be with  
 “ him to behold his Glory.”

Indeed the Purity of the divine Law is sufficient to convince us of the Necessity and Beauty of a holy Life ; but the Promises and Privileges of the Gospel redouble our Obligations, and most sweetly allure us on in the Paths of Duty and a good Life.

When our Hearts are enlarged by the Efficacy and Power of the Gospel of Grace, our Feet run in the Ways of God's Commands. In this consists the Glory of godly Persons and real Christians ; and herein lies the Difference between them and such who have only a Form of Godliness, and never felt the Power thereof.

We have yet many Things to say to you, and lay before you, (for God be thanked that we can solemnly assure you, our Hearts are filled with Love to your Souls, and 'tis your Welfare we seek and wish) but we must content ourselves with hinting a few Things more at present : And Oh ! may it please God, to make our Instructions as useful to you, as they are well meant by us.

We earnestly recommend to you the careful Observance of Days of Fasting and Prayer. This is a necessary and delightful Duty ; and many have found it good  
 for

for them to draw nigh to God in this Manner : And such have been Seasons of Refreshing from the Presence of the Lord.

'Tis a Mercy that we have a God, who is our God, to go unto ; and that we have a Mediator and Intercessor with him : Let us draw near therefore with true Hearts, and in a full Assurance of Faith ; let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need. Oh ! Brethren, *watch* and pray, *fast* and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation.

Permit us to give you a friendly Hint with regard to your Books and Reading. It may be feared, perhaps, that some who have but little Time in their Hands, spend too much of that Time in reading the Works of Men, and neglect the precious Word of God. 'Tis for such we intend the present Caution ; and would beg of you, dear Friends, that rather than you should neglect the Reading of the Bible to read the Books of Men, you would neglect even some worldly Affairs, to read the Book of God. Oh ! may the Lord's Statutes be your Songs in the House of your Pilgrimage ; and the Law of his Mouth better to you than Thousands of Gold and Silver.

We entreat you to pay the most sacred and conscientious Regard to the Lord's Day. Don't think it sufficient to attend once or twice on the stated Means and Ministry of the Word ; but endeavour to keep all the Day holy to the Lord. On the one Hand, labour to avoid, not only all servile Works, but all Manner of Conversation, and even *Thoughts* about the World. On the other, endeavour to spend the whole Day in a devotional, serious and religious Manner ; and especially before and after public Worship, give Attendance to Reading, Meditation, godly Conversation and Prayer.



The Manner in which that Part of God's Law respecting the Sabbath, is introduced, is equally beautiful and weighty, *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.* God grant that these Words may be written on all your Hearts, and be very present in all your Thoughts, on the Morning of every Day of Rest, while you are in the World; that so you might not do your own Pleasure on God's holy Day, but call the Sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord honourable, and honour him; not doing your own Ways, nor finding your own Pleasures, nor speaking your own Words. And remember, that 'tis not long e're you must appear before the Judgment-Seat of the Son of Man, who is Lord also of the Sabbath Day.

As to the State of the Churches, though they are not without Complaints, yet upon the Whole are in Peace, and Prosperous; have Plenty of the Means, and the Gospel in its Purity. Blessings of the utmost Consequence to their Joy and Encrease, while in their militant State. Eighty-two have been added by Baptism this Year, and Nineteen removed by Death.

Now, dear Brethren, what shall we say more; our Mouth is opened to you, our Heart is enlarged: We should gladly continue our Admonitions, and lengthen out our Instructions and Exhortations, but Time forbids; and therefore we commend you to God, and the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

*And remain, and subscribe ourselves, your most affectionate Brethren, in the Bonds of the Gospel of the Grace of God.*

Signed June 13, in Behalf of the whole  
Assembly, by the Moderator,

JOHN POYNTING.

## MINUTES of the ASSOCIATION.

On *Monday* Evening, the Messengers being met some Time was improved in Prayer, and the Letter from the several Churches read. A private Meeting for Prayer and Conference, relative to the Affairs of the Churches, was held on *Tuesday* Morning. The public Meeting was opened at 10 o'Clock by Brother *John Butterworth*; Brother *James Butterworth* proceeded in Prayer; Brother *Beddome* preached from 2 Cor. i. 14.; Brother *Knight* then prayed; Brother *As* preached from *Acts* viii. 5, 6, 7, 8; and Brother *Jones* concluded in Prayer, and dismissed the Assembly.

We met together the same Evening for Prayer, and to review the State of the Churches, and appointed Brother *Turner* to draw up the Circular Letter.

On *Wednesday* Morning the Circular Letter was read and approved, and the Moderator closed the Solemnity with Prayer.

The next Association to be at *Baurton on the Water* to meet on *Tuesday* Evening in the *Whitsun* Week. Brother *Turner* and Brother *McGowan* to preach, and in Case of Failure, Brothers *Woodman* or *Thomas*.

*N. B.* As it hath pleased God to remove out of the World of Sin and Sorrow our beloved Brother, *John Overbury*, and as the Church late under his Care, is by this affecting Providence, left destitute; we earnestly entreat the Sister Associate Churches, to give them the Assistance in their Power; not only by their Counsels and Prayers, but by sending them Supplies.

F27 I N 16 S.





